

**Suggested Remarks for the
Robert E. Wuertz, OEDG/USAID
Computer Package Turn-over Ceremony
Panamao National High School
Panamao, Sulu
June 1, 2006**

Hon. Benjamin T. Loong,
Sulu Provincial Governor
Hon. Hadji Bassar S. Abdurajak,
Panamao Municipal Mayor
Rasha L. Jai, Principal,
Panamao NHS
Bainulla Saslihuddin,
PTCA President, Panamao NHS
Moreno Ammara, Student Body President,
Panamao NHS
Colleagues from the United States Government
and the GEM Program,
Teachers and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mabuhay! Asalamu Alaikum! Good Morning!

It is a great pleasure and a privilege to be
here with you all today, as we formally turn
over a computer assistance package to the
Panamao National High School in Panamao,
Sulu.

This morning, the American people are providing ten internet-connected computers, a printer, software, and related items to the PTCA and the school. In addition, over the next two or three months, selected teachers from the school will receive training on using computers and the resources of the internet to enrich the school's educational programs.

These internet-connected computers are being provided by USAID to encourage teachers and students to use computers and the internet as resources to enhance learning. The computers also enable students to tap the vast resources of the internet to conduct research, establish their own e-mail

accounts, and communicate with other students throughout the world.

The internet connection provides you access to a vast highway that can take you beyond the borders of your community, beyond your province, and beyond your country, and indeed, to any destination in the world.

You can now be connected, at the click of a mouse, to information and to people from other societies and cultures all around the world.

So, though you may live geographically on an island, you now are part of an inter-connected, borderless world.

Some sociologists and economists see the peoples of the world as being split into two distinct groups: those with access to the new information technologies, and those without such access. They refer to the split as "the digital divide." Those people without access to the new technologies are seen as being on "the wrong side of the digital divide."

The U.S. Government's objective in supporting the computerization program is to try to make sure that children in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago do not end up on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The Panamao National High School is one of twelve schools in the Province of Sulu - and the first school in Panamao - that have become our partners. But it will not be the last. We anticipate providing internet-connected computers to several more schools in Sulu province over the coming months.

This installation really does represent a true partnership, between the US and Philippines Governments, on the one hand, and the parents and teachers of this school, represented here today by Mr. Bainulla Saslihuddin, the President of the Panamao National High School PTCA, on the other hand. The PTCA has agreed to accept financial responsibility for the maintenance of these computers, and for paying the

internet connection fees at the end of one year.

Thank you, Principal Jai and PTCA President Saslihuddin, for representing and supporting the Panamao National High School so ably and effectively. Thanks also to all of you present here for your warm welcome and hospitality.

Mabuhay tayong lahat!